

Globalisation, Intercultural Communication and Cultural Homogeneity

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BACKGROUND

Globalization, intercultural communication and cultural homogeneity are different concepts which have something in common for their functionality. The central thing to these three concepts is the information sharing through verbal and nonverbal means. That is communication. Therefore, each of these concepts i.e. globalization, intercultural communication and cultural homogeneity is made possible through exchange of information across geographical and social divides as well as the influence and impacts of communication on cultures, economies, media, politics and health of the people across the globe.

Communication has brought the world together so much through the aid of the media to the extent that there is no boundary in the world again. And the values and cultures of the people of different background and locations have now diffused to other regions. According to Spitzberg (2000), the constraints of the geography are shrinking and the world is becoming a single place. He further stated that the world is shrinking that, the travels that once took months now takes hours; business dealings that were once confined primarily to local economies have given way to an extensively integrated world economy; information that once traveled through error prone and time consuming methods now appears in a blink of an eye across wide range of media; people in virtually all locations of the world are more mobile than ever and are more likely to transverse into cultures different from their own. Various cultures across the world are now more accessible than ever before and people of diverse cultures are coming into contact at an ever increasing rate.

Globalization

Peterson Institute of International Economics (2021), describes globalization, as the growing interdependence of the world economies, cultures and populations brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology and flows of the investments, people and information. In short, the word globalization is the process or activities that bring the people across various geographical divides of the world together. This was enabled by the rapid development in technology that enhance information sharing across the globe. This is major function of communication which emphasize on sending and receiving information through a channel. Wikipedia describes globalization as, “the process of interaction and integration among people, companies and government worldwide. Globalization has accelerated since 18th century due to advance in transportation and communication”.

Globalization and communication are two interdependent variables. Communication as an important tool of globalization has made the coming together of the world possible as a result of the technological advancement which now create many platforms for interface and interaction among the people of different regions across the world and language interpretation device is enhancing the integration of the people across the world by creating better understanding and cohesion. People of different geographical locations can now communicate and exchange ideas based on individual interest and what they intend to benefit from such interaction. Globalization has different dimensions, Peterson Institute of International Economics (2001) divides globalization to three types which are economic globalization, cultural globalization and political globalization.

Economic Globalization

In the work of Shangquan (2000), economic globalization was described as the increasing interdependence of the world economies as a result of growing scale of cross border trade of commodities and services, flow of international capital and wide and rapid growing significance of information in all types of productive activities and marketization which are the two forces for economic globalization. Therefore, economic globalization is advancing the economies of the nations and facilitating rapid growth of local businesses. This can be largely attributed to the growing communication activities among the people of the world. Based on the fact that communication has been made easy across the borders. We now see a young girl transacting business from her village in Ekiti state in Nigeria with a business partner in China or in America. One can now order for goods and services from anywhere in the world through the social media and make payment through e-facility. Information and communication technology is facilitating economic globalization in no small measure. Therefore, the place of communication in the globalization process cannot be overemphasized.

Cultural Globalization

This is another form of globalization. Wikipedia, describes cultural globalization as, “the transmission of ideas, meanings and values around the world in such a way as to extend and intensify social relations. This process is marked by the common consumption of culture that have been diffused by the internet, popular culture media and international travels”. Media and communication are playing the major role in the cultural growth and spread across the world. The speedy transmission and exchange of cultures can be attributed to the emergence and the growth of internet technology which enhance cultural diffusion among the people of various cultural background and geographical divides due to the persistent interaction through the various channels of communication on the internet. It is through the process of these interface and interactions that people are been influenced through direct or indirect exchange of ideas, information, altitude, food, clothing and other cultural values.

Political Globalization

The continuous growth of the political system across the world is what led to political globalization. This has reflected in the ways by which the emerging global bodies like World Health Organisation WHO, United Nations UN, European Union EU, African Union AU, etc. are growing influence in the world politics. The political globalization has grown through the help of media and communication. This is helping to facilitate support to the developing nations in their political process and unite the world in decision making. As this is contributing to the growth and advancement of democracy in no small measure. It however has its negative effects on the world today. The growing international connections are gradually bringing undue influence of some nations on the political decisions of other nations. It is also breeding political rivalry and power tussle among the world super power nations which has resulted in wars and threat of war.

Intercultural Communication

Culture in simple term is the values and norms of a community in which one is brought up. Language of communication is an important way of living among the people of a particular identity. Therefore, intercultural communication is the communication that exist between the people of different cultural divides. This may be a communication between the people of two or more cultural background. Chen & Starosta (1998: 28), defines intercultural communication as the communication between people from different cultures. However, Arasaratnam (2013), describes intercultural communication as, “the effects on communication behavior when different cultures interact together. Hence, one way of viewing intercultural communication is as communication that unfolds in symbolic intercultural spaces.” Depends on the angle you view it, but the main thing in intercultural communication is the exchange of information between people of different cultural divides.

Therefore, the opportunity that various communication channels have given people of different cultures across the globe to come together to exchange ideas, information, values and languages has resulted to what is called globalization.

Competence of Intercultural Communication

In the words of Spitzberg (2000), “the world is shrinking” the world is shrinking in the sense that intercultural communication has brought the world together in sharing values. This has created common goals among the people of the world. Therefore, intercultural communication can be said to have the following competence:

- According to Chen and Starosta (1998), only through competent inter cultural communication can persons from different cultures communicate effectively and appropriately in the upcoming global society
- Also, Beamer (1992), describes intercultural competence as the ability to encode and decode meanings in matches that correspond to the meaning held in the other communicator’s repository.
- People of diverse culture are coming into contact at an increasing rate and various cultures of the world are more accessible than ever before

Barriers of Intercultural Communication

As much as intercultural communication is facilitating globalization, there are some barriers to this among the cultural divides in the world.

Pettokorpi & Clausen (2011), opined that the main linguistic barriers to intercultural communication were the lack of a shared language and low motivation to improve foreign language proficiency.

Ethnocentrism is another barrier to intercultural communication. Ethnocentrism is a belief in the centrality of one’s own culture. It is often involves judging aspect of another culture by the standard of one’s own

Bennett (1993), defines ethnocentrism as assuming that the world view of one’s own culture is central to all reality.

Cultural Homogeneity

Wikipedia describes cultural homogeneity as an aspect of cultural globalization listed as one of its main characteristics and refer to the reduction in cultural diversity through the popularization and diffusion of a wide array of cultural symbols. – Not only physical objects but customs, ideas and values. The coming together of the people across cultural divides in the world to share values. The coming together of the people across cultural divides in the world to share values, ideas and customs through communication is gradually bringing cultural homogeneity to the world. It can now be said that there is no cultural boundary in the world again. Hence,

the emergence of globalization. Even though, the globalization may not mean homogeneity but globalization enhances cultural identity.

CONCLUSION

Globalization, intercultural communication and cultural homogeneity are the same thing coming from different dimension. They are all pointing toward globalization which is majorly enhanced by the intercultural communication. The rapid technical development, especially those that create platforms for the exchange of information and values across all borders is contributing so much in bringing people across cultural divides of the world together and this is really helping the world in diverse ways.

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